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AUTHOR	Niedzielski, Henri
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ABSTRACT

The nature and function of a body of educators in Hawaii known as the Traveling Teachers Teams are examined in this article. Emulating the business practice of sending sales representatives into the field to inform prospective clients of pertinent information vital to business success, the teachers attempt to inform the general public of the value and nature of language instruction. In this paper the recorded minutes of a panel discussion held in October 1968 by team members on the necessity of foreign language learning are presented. (RL)

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T. T. T.

HALT CREATES TRAVELING TEACHERS TEAMS

by

Henry Niedzielski

Among other activities, during the meeting it held on December 19, 1970, HALT voted to create Traveling Teachers Teams which will be known as TTT. For the general public as well as for the HALT members which could not attend, the answer to some possible questions are given hereunder.

What is a TTT? It is a team made up of two or three people in the purpose of educating the public about the necessity or advantages of foreign language studies.

Who are the members of the TTT? Anyone, teacher, student, administrator, lay person, who would like to see foreign language studies expanded and is willing to speak on behalf of these studies. Up to date seven person, including two students, volunteered. We need more people. Please contact any HALT officer to communicate your willingness.

Where will the TTT meet the public? Seeds kept in a bag will not produce much. To reap a harvest, you must sow right in the field. The TTT will thus go out to various academic, social, business, public or private clubs and organizations. PTA's, Rotary, Lions Club, monthly school meetings are some of the places to be visited.

When will the TTT go out to the various groups of people? Each TTT will choose a time when a particular organization is conducting a meeting, obtain an invitation to speak, and participate in a discussion. It is hoped that enough TTT's can be formed so that each would not need to travel more than once a month.

Why are TTT's necessary? Every business corporation sends salesmen out to the prospective buyers, every large civic organization has delegates judiciously placed in strategic places, most professions have representatives throughout the country, if we believe that foreign language teachers have an important mission in our civilization, we must attract students. Hence we need to influence the public opinion, and, for that reason, we need to send out the good word about foreign language studies and spread it wherever it will be beneficial.

A more detailed answer to this question of "Why are TTT's necessary?" is provided in the following recorded minutes of a panel discussion HALT organized on October 31, 1968 on the necessity

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"Charles Minor:

> Everybody speaks a language, whether sign or symbol, visual or verbal. Language on the verbal level is a highly complicated activity and it's wholly learned. It involves both neural and muscular tissue and it has psychological, interpersonal, and cultural aspects that are indispensable to its acquisition and use. Educators are concerned with curriculum development, as they have always been. Many are raising the question whether or not language learning is necessary to assure a liberal education. Should the number of courses in a college be made optional, or eliminated, or required? It is our concern today not as makers of curriculum but as teachers of Foreign Languages to address ourselves to a topic of interest to ourselves and to those to whom we wish to sell our product. Is it necessary to learn a foreign language?

Charles Shores:

> The universities seem to think so. I would think the question might come down to that: why do the universities require a FL? I think probably that's the essence of our problem here, and I think, if we can get to that, maybe we can understand what the meaning of learning a FL is.

Alfred Burns:

> Well, traditionally the knowledge of a FL has been considered a part of a liberal education. Now this is not enough. We have to recognize that our thought process is a verbal process and that it is a great limitation to know how a nation thinks; and a nation thinks in its language; and the way it thinks is, to more than is generally assumed, dictated by the particularities of the language. Maybe Dr. John Young can amplify on that somewhat.

John Young:

> I am not sure whether I can answer Mr. Shores' question. If I may be blunt about this, I could say that the University wants to have this requirement because at the pre-college level, people are not trying to get the language taught or learned. If at the pre-college level people do a better job and push the FL teaching then probably someday we may not have this need. Now, coming back to the basic question as to why a foreign languages or why a language; personally, I feel that without a language we, as human beings, can never formulate our ideas or even think; and then without a language (suppose you have a miracle way of developing your idea without language) you can't communicate with your fellow human being. Therefore,

we need a language or languages. However, then why a foreign language? If the world can be dominated or governed by one race or one ethnic group or one language (well maybe that may fine, okay, or it may not be fine)..., but still that is not the case, therefore we need foreign language study, learning not only to develop this communication skill, to know our neighbors, but also to liberate our own monolingual or monocultural, dogmatic type of thinking. This in itself would be a big contribution in building up our education. Therefore, in my mind we can only develop this empathy through this language skill; and without that empathy we cannot live with other people. Therefore, I would say foreign language study is necessary. Then, when? But first this depends on what kind of skill and what kind of content we have in mind, but I personally feel that skill development stage of language learning should be covered at a pre-college level; therefore, the university, the college, would like to have this requirement until the time this is done.

Father McGuire:

I tried to interrupt because Dr. Young was bringing in the fourth, fifth, and sixth reasons why we should have language. I would like to go back to the first assumption that we have need for teaching languages because the university wants languages. And then you start looking around the university: the students in the department of education, the students in the business college, the students in engineering; and we start wondering - now who does want languages in the staid, old-fashioned college of liberal arts? But in the professional schools that are building the schools that are affecting society, no language requirements. Possibly they like to have them in the pre-college years but they are not going to insist on them in the college itself. That's one factor. Another factor - and this I think is the point brought out by Dr. Burns - that language is a vehicle for understanding and absorbing culture; and, on the surface, I think it's rather plausible and it's a good, facile argument. I am thinking in terms, historically, of the spreading of the world's religions in which cultures were transferred, in which whole nations, whole peoples were assimilated by another society by means of a sword and not by tongue. And it worked pretty effectively. You might think in terms of if we associate a common culture, a common language, with understanding, with empathy, with getting along with people, then why is it that people in Eastern Europe who have a common basic Slavic background, Polish people and Russian people, for example, don't seem to get along, except that they agree that one or the other should beget. We have the problem in America, where we all speak various dialects and levels of English, where we have a common culture, through television, and still we have family divisions, rivalries among states. There are other

factors involved in this thing. I think here in Hawaii is a good example - we have people coming from Oriental cultures; and they have Oriental names; and in the families, in many cases, they speak Japanese, versions of Chinese, and Tagalog, but they are not Japanese, Chinese, or Filipinos. They have lost that culture. Even when you transfer religion - Buddhist religion - to a culture which, I think, is essentially Christian because of the mainland influences, even the Buddhist religion takes on the overtones of Christianity; and a special day of worship, like Sunday, will come into being. I don't think that language is the complete answer and maybe not the main answer for developing friendship, culture, or understanding.

Alfred Burns:

If I may carry on the argument further, then people should stop talking if the mutual understanding only leads to more hostility like among Slavic people and language is conducive to that sort of thing; and people should not talk to each other at all, and they would get along. That is one of the strongest arguments for silence I have heard. But I would like to take up another point that you have made that the old stick in the mud, liberal arts college, is the only one to insist on language. Yes, it is true there is actually the conceit that the college of arts and sciences teaches culture and the greatest human thoughts are found to be in literature. Language is alright for conversation, but in conversation 90% of what is being communicated is noise - how is your aunt? - if you are fortunate enough to be in a foreign country, - take me to a hotel, to a taxi driver; where is the museum? etc. - But the one treasure of language is the literature. There you communicate with the greatest minds of all times. I maintain that you cannot understand fully literature intranslation. If you really want to get to know the literature and the real thoughts that have advanced humanity, you have to go back to literature; and you need to know the language of a nation to understand its literature. If you don't want to remain parochial you have to learn language; and for that purpose, I think it is a pretty good idea in the college of arts and sciences to teach languages.

Charles Shores:

I would like to speak for my high school students. I have had a number of occasions to sit down with them and discuss this very issue of the value of foreign language learning. There are a number of things discussed which I would like to share with you; and one of the questions raised - why are we required to take a foreign language when we know the ability to understand and speak and also to read and write cannot be acquired in two or three years sequence in the secondary schools; and what can we expect of a year or two of language study at

the university level? And it seems to me many of them feel that, because of the fact that they are required to take the foreign language, that it just completely takes all pleasure out of foreign language learning.

Alfred Burns:

I believe that. But they are then in the position to really enjoy their knowledge that they have acquired in the secondary school to really devote themselves to the literature and study the civilization of other nations.

John Young:

I would like to come back to Father McGuire's one important assumption, namely - look, even though we speak the same language, share the same environment, still we have quarrels, we have divorce courts, and fights, and so on. Now, my argument against that particular type of thinking is this: we have never, say, argued in favor of foreign language study because foreign language study could solve all our problems. The only assumption we make here is this: by having one more language or other language facilities, or acquiring those facilites, you will get one more tool, one more basis in enabling you to solve the problem in an easier way. This does not assure you to solve all your problems but this will at least get you one more (and believe me, a very important one) tool - and the facility - that's our point. Now, if we have a basic philosophy to the effect that human beings can never solve their problem unless they use arms or fight, their talk wouldn't help. If we keep that philosophy, I would agree with Father McGuire's point. If we feel that language may not solve all those problems, at least it can reduce the difficulties, or could be a good starting point in solving the problems; then I would say "why not?" We should go ahead and search for any possible means to help human beings, have a life a little bit happier and better than what we have today.

Father McGuire:

Could I answer that question? My answer there is that, on the question of consistency, Dr. Young has a very good point there. When you are approaching any problem the more roads you can take, the more points of view, the more tools, the better. In fact,that is being eminently practical and realistic, and being and continuing our practicality and our sensitive realism, we examine human nature as human nature is going to be; we will settle our problems with bombs, with muscles, with (pardon the expression) law and order; and, in between times, we willbe discussing things because we will have

to get our breath back before assuming the assault again. So I do think that we have to be quite realistic. In fact, as we keep talking about languages, we keep coming back to saying that languages are practical; that is what can we get out of it if we want to understand other people, and languages help us do that. If it is going to help us commercially as a representative of a country in Japan or South America then let us get the language. If we are affluent enough to travel and going to spend a year in some country, get the language. But for most of the hardheaded and xenophobic Americans, language is not the answer. It's for a few. If you want to sell it to the few I would say great, but why impose it on the masses?

Charles Minor:

I think that Dr. Young and Father McGuire have really delved into this thing very deeply; and I think we've all gained a great deal from it; but I can't help but come back to the question about what you say to the student who puts this topic of conversation to the form of a question. Too many of us really do not know the answer. In fact, I heard a Ph.D. in foreign languages one time say "Let's not ask that question at our faculty meetings or steering committee meetings because then you would be opening Pandora's Box;" which is a backward admission that there is no real answer to the necessity for teaching a foreign language or learning a foreign language either. And this may be the case with some teachers - they think it's fun or "why not?", no more than that. I think all of us have been approached with this question by our students, especially those in the secondary and elementary schools; and I think probably we need to try to get some more direct answers to this very, very practical question which comes from our students and I would be very interested in hearing what some of the people in the audience think. We have done a lot of talking. The panel are now opening the questions to you. As people who are interested in the field of language teaching, we would like to have your reaction to either one of the ideas that has been promulgated here, some idea that you may have and would like to react to. It is now open to you.

Henri Niedzielski:

I have a question. The United States is the most powerful country in the world, and I knew it when I came here. Why do the Americans have to study other languages? Let the other people study languages.

Alfred Burns:

In connection with this. Certainly one of the most enriching experiences that anyone can have is to travel. And the pleasure and the gain of knowledge in traveling is certainly in direct

proportion to the languages you can converse with and the degree to which you can do it in any country. And probably something that becomes more widespread all the time - you have the exchange programs in the colleges, study abroad programs - and I think there's nobody that will vow sincerely that that is without value to the students and to the matter of an international understanding on the whole. Secondly, you have language - and we are always talking about the spoken language. There are the classical languages, without which I think it's completely impossible to understand our civilization and where it came from and all. We can follow it from the same beginnings that we started from to its height and unfortunately to its complete collapse (and I suspect there may be a lesson there someplace, which we might be able to learn in the study of the classics). So the classical languages have the same enriching quality as modern languages, with breaking out of your own parochial culture. On the other hand, you can't understand yourself and your language and your own thought process as long as you assume that's the only way to think and to speak. You have to have the experience that other people speak and think differently before you can realize that it's possible to look at a thing in different ways according to the place where you're born.

Henri Niedzielski:

It's very easy to preach the study of foreign languages to foreign language teachers but I think you should educate the public. Do you have any plans for that?

Alfred Burns:

This is a part of it because the reason that we chose that program in a meeting of foreign language teachers is: the foreign language teacher is always on the defensive, on the attack, and has to justify to the students, to the administration, to the parents, why it is necessary to teach a foreign language; and we thought this panel would be a good thing to marshal the arguments - summarizing after tape recording and let everybody have it, when each of the teachers becomes a missionary in carrying forth the reasons why.

Henri Niedzielski:

Do you plan on having people from this assembly, or from the panel, go out to Lions Clubs, the Rotary, to all kinds of public organizations, or private organizations, and to preach the necessity of foreign language learning?

Alfred Burns:

No, because I don't believe in preaching and the effect of preaching.

John DeFrancis commented on the dangers of being or remaining overbearing, xenophobic, uncultured, narrow-minded, provincial isolationist.

Robert W. Cannaday, Jr. explained that only human beings learn languages and humanists learn foreign languages. "We want to study foreign languages because we are neither animals nor brutes."

Conclusion:

The reader has probably noticed that it took slightly over two years for HALT to vote TTTS in. Altogether almost three years elapsed since this idea was born while I was discussing the problems of the profession with my chairman, Richard K. Seymour. It is hoped that its implementation will be much more rapid and efficient.

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ANNUAL NATIONAL FRENCH CONTEST

The American Association of Teachers of French (AATF) will hold its thirty-sixth Annual National French Contest April 1, 2, 3, 1971. This contest is offered to all students of French from Public, Private, and Parochial Secondary Schools in the United States and Canada - levels I to IV -. Native French speakers are not eligible.

Teachers, to acquaint themselves with the contest, should read the article "The Contest" on the French Review, which is scheduled to appear in the October issue, 1970.

Teachers interested in entering students may write for information either to their state-chairman or to Mr. Sidney L. Teitelbaum, National Director of the contest, Box 86, Plainview, N. Y. 11803.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals has placed this contest on the approved list of National Contests and Activities.

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